WOMEN NEWS

"...Women's advancement has achieved a certain momentum ... it will also continue to exist as a force to be reckoned with. ..."

Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (paragraph 22)

No. 35, March 1990

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN HOLDS ITS NINTH SESSION IN NEW YORK

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its ninth session in New York from 22 January to 2 February 1990.

The Committee, composed of 23 experts serving in their individual capacities, was established under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and meets annually to monitor the progress made by States parties to the Convention in implementing its provisions. Upon ratification or accession to the Convention, States commit themselves to adapt their legislation, customs and practices to promote and protect women's rights and equality. Within one year they are required to submit an initial report and subsequently a periodic report at least every four years. The Committee has so far reviewed 51 initial reports and 5 second periodic reports. At the time of the ninth session, there were 100 States parties to the Convention (see *Women News* No. 33).

A pre-sessional working group met from 17 to 19 January to discuss the manner in which the Committee should proceed with the examination of the second periodic reports of States parties to the Convention.

Under agenda item No. 2, the Committee considered the initial reports of Germany, Federal Republic of, Malawi, Peru, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United Republic of Tanzania as well as the second periodic reports of Canada, Egypt, Mexico, Mongolia and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Two general recommendations (Nos. 14 and 15) based on article 21 of the Convention were adopted by the Committee under agenda item No. 3. Consideration of further draft general recommendations on unpaid women workers of family enterprises; recognition of the unremunerated contribution of women to the gross national product; women workers in enterprises; and women in development aid that

Members of the Committee in 1990

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Kissem Walla-Tchangai (Togo)

Published to promote the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women—equality, development and peace and of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, by the United Nations Office at Vienna.

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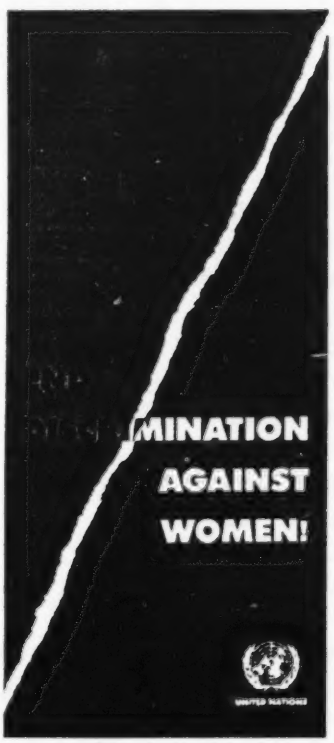
had been proposed was deferred until the tenth session because of time constraints.

In general recommendation No. 14 on female circumcision, the Committee recommended that States parties take appropriate and effective measures with a view to eradicating the practice of female circumcision; include in their national health policies appropriate strategies aimed at eradicating female circumcision in public health care; invite assistance, information and advice from the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system to support and assist efforts being deployed to eliminate harmful traditional practices; and include in their reports to the Committee, under articles 10 and 12 of the Convention, information on measures taken to eliminate female circumcision.

Information kit on the Convention *



* See page 4 for details

Avoidance of discrimination against women in national strategies for the prevention and control of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the subject of general recommendation No. 15, in which the Committee recommended that States parties intensify efforts in disseminating information to increase public awareness of the risk of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection and AIDS, especially in women and children, and of its effects on them; that programmes to combat AIDS should give special attention to the rights and needs of women and children, and to the factors relating to the reproductive role of women and their subordinate position in some societies, which make them especially vulnerable to HIV infection; that States parties ensure the active participation of women in primary health care and take measures to enhance their role as care providers, health workers and educators in the prevention of infection with HIV; and that all States parties include in their reports under article 12 of the Convention information on the effects of AIDS on the situation of women and on the action taken to cater to the needs of those women who are infected and to prevent specific discrimination against women in response to AIDS.

The Committee requested that its tenth session should be held at Vienna from 21 January to 1 February 1991. In view of the success of the pre-sessional group at the current session and the large number of periodic reports awaiting consideration, the Committee decided that a pre-sessional working group should be convened before the tenth and each subsequent session.

The fifth meeting of States parties to the Convention was convened on 5 and 6 February 1990.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-fourth session held at Vienna, from 26 February to 9 March 1990

The thirty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which has just been enlarged to 45 members, was of an extended duration in order to undertake the first five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. This subject will be covered in *Women 2000* No. 2, 1990.

Representatives of 43 States members of the Commission participated in the session, which was also attended by observers from 31 States Members of the United Nations, 3 non-Member States, 4 specialized agencies, 6 intergovernmental organizations, 1 liberation movement, 55 non-governmental organizations and 1 other organization. At the first meeting, the following officers were elected by acclamation:

Chairperson:
Helga E. HOERZ (German Democratic Republic)
Vice-Chairpersons:
Patricia LICUANAN (Philippines)
Esther LOZANO DE REY (Colombia)
Mervat TALAWY (Egypt)
Rapporteur: Olivier Maitland PELEN (France)

As well as the review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, items on the agenda included consideration of the priority themes: equality, development and peace.

Equality: The theme for 1990 was equality in political participation and decision-making. The discussion document (E/CN.6/1990/2) was based largely on the findings of the expert group meeting on the same subject, which had been held in Vienna in September 1989 (see *Women 2000* No. 1, 1990).

Development: Under the title of "The negative effects of the international economic situation on the improvement of the status of women", the Commission reflected on ways and means of enhancing women's ability to contribute to economic recovery and to prevent the increase of inequality through adjustment policies.

Peace: The discussion on women in areas affected by armed conflicts, foreign intervention, alien and colonial domination, foreign occupation and threats to peace concentrated on the protection and humanitarian assistance necessary for women in such areas and stressed the innocence of women as victims as they had had no part in the decision-making leading to the conflict, as well as on the role and potential of women in the peace process.

The Commission agreed to recommend the holding of a world conference in 1995 to review and appraise the monitoring of the Strategies over the subsequent five years. It was agreed that by attaching a high level of importance to the review and appraisal, momentum would be rekindled at the national level in efforts to implement the Strategies.

Members of the Commission 1990

	Term expires		*Term expires*
Australia	1990	Italy	1990
Austria	1992	Jamaica	1993
Bahamas	1993	Japan	1992
Bangladesh	1990	Lesotho	1991
Brazil	1992	Malaysia	1993
Burkina Faso	1991	Mexico	1990
Canada	1992	Morocco	1992
China	1991	Nigeria	1993
Colombia	1992	Pakistan	1991
Costa Rica	1991	Philippines	1990
Côte d'Ivoire	1990	Poland	1992
Cuba	1991	Sudan	1992
Cyprus	1993	Sweden	1991
Czechoslovakia	1990	Thailand	1992
Ecuador	1993	Turkey	1991
Egypt	1993	Uganda	1993
France	1992	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	1990
Gabon	1990	United Republic of Tanzania	1992
German Democratic Republic	1991	United States of America	1990
Ghana	1993	Zaire	1990
Guatemala	1991	Zimbabwe	1993
India	1993		
Indonesia	1993		
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	1993		

NGO CONSULTATION

Prior to the extended thirty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, a meeting of international non-governmental organizations was convened at Vienna on 22 and 23 February 1990. The theme of the consultation, which consisted of 20 workshops on specific subjects, as well as plenary meetings, was "Making the Forward-looking Strategies work".

The consultation was attended by some 250 participants from 48 countries, 30 of which were developing countries, representing 68 non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

More details of the consultation will be contained in *Women 2000* No. 2, 1990, the subject of which will be the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

GOVERNMENT OF NIGER HOSTS MEETING ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

A meeting of high-level experts was convened by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at Niamey, Niger, from 29 to 31 January 1990, to formulate measures and recommendations for national and international action aimed at strengthening women's role in the development of the least developed countries. Participants included eminent persons from 15 of the least developed countries, serving in their personal capacity, as well as representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and regional development research centres. The main background document for the discussion was a study prepared by a consultant for the UNCTAD secretariat entitled "Women and development in the least developed countries: assessment and proposals for action".

The vital role that women play in the rural and urban economies of the least developed countries has been recognized at several high-level international meetings. The recommendations of the Niger meeting aimed at promoting women's participation in the productive sectors; enhancing their access to, and participation in, the social sector; and incorporating their concerns in mainstream development programmes, including the participation of women in the planning process.

International Seminar on Women and the Media

On 13 October 1989, an International Seminar on Women and the Media was held at Columbia University, New York, under the auspices of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. The one-day event drew more than 60 participants from around the world, including students of journalism and international affairs, media professionals, researchers and representatives of women's organizations. Also attending were the 21 participants in the United Nations Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from Developing Countries.

The participants sought to explore various aspects of sex-role stereotyping in mass communication from an international perspective. Three issues - violence against women, women and power, and culture and social organization - were discussed in separate workshops, the common purpose of which was to analyse media images of women in relation to social reality and gender roles.

The Seminar was highly successful in achieving its three objectives: to highlight the subtle mechanisms in which gender bias can influence the media's approach to any given issue; to foster a cross-cultural perspective regarding images of women and recognition of the international proliferation of stereotypes; and to follow an action-oriented approach of exploring ways for journalists of eliminating sex stereotyping in their everyday work. It was recommended by the participants that a similar seminar should become a regular part of the United Nations Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from Developing Countries.

Information kit on the Convention

In observance of the tenth anniversary of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* the United Nations Department of Public Information issued an information kit on the Convention.

Copies of the kit are available in English, French and Spanish from:

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Development and
Human Rights
Programmes Section
Room S-1061
Department of Public
Information
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
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